“Sivagamiyin Sabatham”: A Tale of Love, War, and Divine Dance

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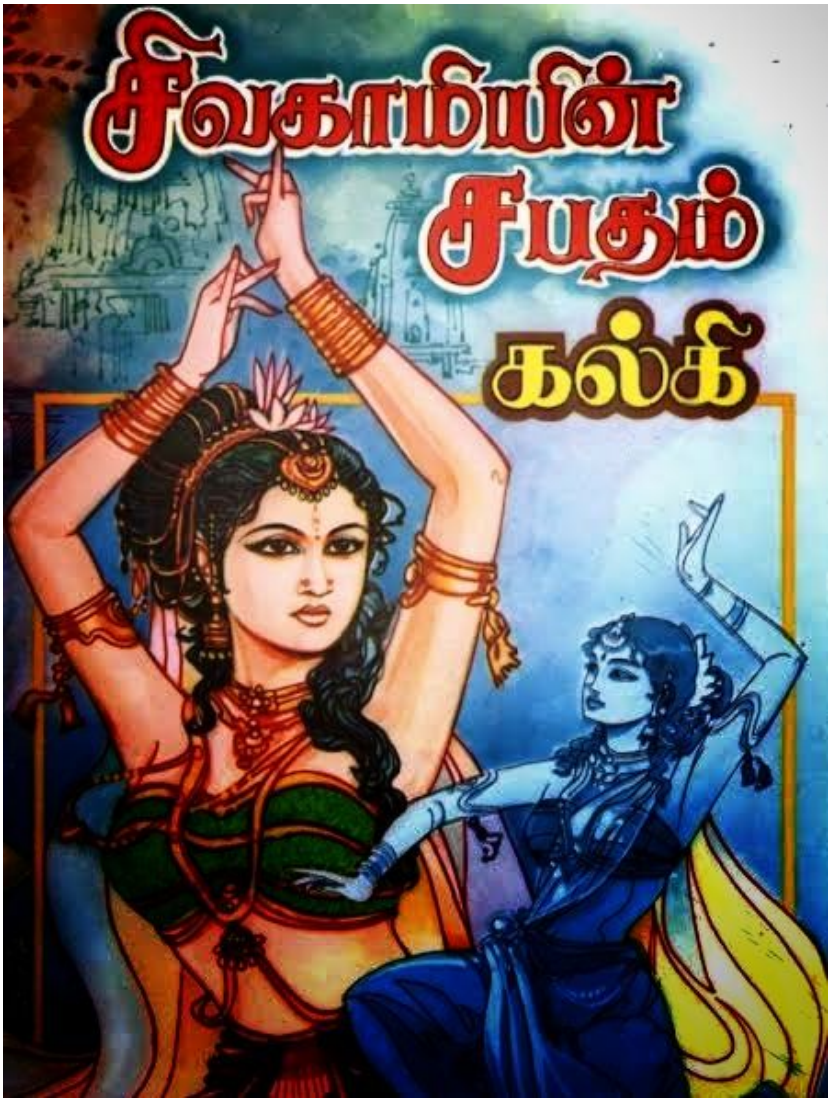

I completed the audiobook of Kalki’s “Sivagamiyin Sabatham” today. I must say, following “Ponniyin Selvan,” it stands out as an excellent story, albeit with fewer characters and less cunning and selfishness. The narrative delves into childhood crushes evolving into love and explores the consequences. Initially, I anticipated a vow between the king and Sivagami, but its unexpected placement left me questioning its necessity. My perspective may be subjective, as unmet expectations can influence perceptions. The emotional ending brought tears, although it was somewhat anticipated.

The narrative commences with Paranjothi, a common man, and initially, I speculated a potential love connection with Sivagami. However, the plot takes a turn, focusing on Sivagami and Mammalan, the prince of Kanji and son of Pallava King Mahendra Varman. Amidst kingdom wars, cunning plots, and intrigues, the story unfolds the love between Sivagami and Mammalan. Their relationship, rooted in childhood friendship, includes

moments such as Mammalan saving Sivagami from a flood and her resilience during Pulikeshi's conquest of the Chaluka Kingdom. The tale continues with the typical elements of a love story – romance, expectations, and occasional disagreements between Sivagami and Mammalan.

The plot unfolds as Paranjothi assumes leadership of Kanchi's war soldiers. Pulikeshi's cruel act of making Sivagami perform a divine dance before the public sparks her resentment towards the Chaluka Kingdom. She vows to Naganadhi, Pulikeshi's brother and a devotee of Buddha, that she will destroy Chaluka. Despite Mammalan's pleas for her return, she remains steadfast, harboring hatred towards both him and Pulikeshi. This leads Mammalan to wage war against Pulikeshi, a formidable army, taking almost nine years to revive Sivagami and dismantle the Chaluka Kingdom.

In the course of these years, Mammalan marries the Pandiyan princess, has two children, and the saga concludes with Sivagami's return to Kanchi. Reflecting on her past vows, she finds them unnecessary, and the people of Chaluka grow close to her. However, it's too late, as Mammalan's revenge is executed, destroying the Chaluka Kingdom. After knowing Mammalan's marriage, Sivagami becomes a saint, marrying Lord Shiva and dedicating herself to temple and dance.

Naganadhi, often perceived as a villain, reveals a complex character with genuine love for Sivagami. His cunning manipulations drive Pulikeshi to wage war on Kanchi, ultimately leading Sivagami to the Chaluka Kingdom. Despite his darker motives, there's a mix of lust and a divine connection with Sivagami. Other significant characters include Kannapiran, the chariot driver of Mammalan, and Kamali, Sivagami's neighbor sister. Ayanar, Sivagami's father, a master sculptor, harbors a passion for the "Ajanta dyes." Paranjothi emerges as a pivotal figure, intricately connected to everyone in the unfolding narrative.

The story revolves around Sivagami, whose exceptional beauty and dance prowess captivate Naganadhi, setting in motion a series of events leading to the destruction of the Chaluka Kingdom. While her charm inadvertently brings challenges to two kingdoms, it's not her fault. The qualities that once defined her – childish behavior, smiles, shyness, laughter, and her affection for pets – vanish after her return from Chaluka. The love between her and Mammalan is overshadowed by ego, leaving both bereft of happiness. Only her divine dance in the temple provides solace, helping her forget the complexities of her past.